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# Chief Sources of Sin

PRIDE, COVETOUSNESS, LUST, ANGER,

GLUTTONY, ENVY, SLOTH

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THE  
**Chief Sources of Sin**

SEVEN DISCOURSES ON

PRIDE, COVETOUSNESS, LUST, ANGER,  
GLUTTONY, ENVY, SLOTH

By Rev. M. V. McDONOUGH



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**The Author wishes for his little book, a wide circulation and  
a thorough reading; to every reader, the peace of  
Christ and Salvation.**





# PRIDE



## PRIDE.

**T**HERE are certain vices in our fallen nature which betray us into so much badness, and are such fruitful causes of sin for us, that they may be called sources of our sins. Just as the little spring deep down in the ground, sending up the gallons and gallons of water which fill the well,—just as that little spring is the source of the well, so these vices buried deep down in human nature, are sources of many sins.

The chief of these vices, “the chief sources of sin, are seven: Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy and Sloth; and they are commonly called capital sins” (Balt. Catech.), much as the source of a man’s income is called his capital, or the source and centre of a nation’s life and government its capital city. “Capital” has reference to the head, the beginning, the fountain of anything; and

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thus these seven are capital sins, not that they are always worse than other sins, nor even that they are always mortal sins, but because they are the chief sources and fountains deep down in human nature from which spring up a vast multitude of human iniquities.

Now the first of these "chief sources of sin" is Pride; and it is about Pride that I wish to say a few words to you.

In our English tongue "pride" has grown to have a good meaning, which doesn't strictly belong to it, in addition to the old-fashioned bad meaning, which is properly its own. Thus you sometimes hear people use the word "pride" to denote that moderate and well-ordered respect for themselves as God's men and women, which is neither a sin nor a source of sin, but rather something in the nature of a virtue. I need scarcely say though that in its strict and proper meaning the word "pride" does not refer at all to decent and becoming self-respect, but rather to an excessive and unbecoming admiration and love and delight in oneself and one's own good points.

The very greatest of all the philosophers, St. Thomas Aquinas, defines pride as "the inordinate appetite for one's own excellence."

Every human being has some excellence, some good parts or good qualities of body and soul. There isn't a criminal in the jails nor a murderer on the scaffold or in the electric chair, in whom you could not find something of good if you would only look for it. Every human being has also an appetite, that is, a strong desire, for his own excellence, and feels a certain pleasure and delight in his own good qualities. Keep this delight down where it belongs, hold the appetite within its due and proper bounds, and it is no sin whatever; but let the golden opinion of oneself, the delight in one's own real or imaginary good parts, get beyond its bounds and become "inordinate," as St. Thomas says, or in other words, immoderate and excessive, and there you have the capital sin of pride.

It is sometimes a mortal sin and sometimes a venial sin; very probably, among Catholics at least, much oftener venial than mortal. But whether mortal or

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venial in itself, pride is a cause of other sins innumerable; and thus, not only through its own sinfulness, but also on account of the many other sins which it leads people to commit, it undermines virtue and impedes grace and weakens and ruins millions of souls. It is a very serious spiritual disease. And even as the physician will recognize some bodily disease by its symptoms, so pride also may be recognized by its signs and symptoms.

First, pride causes us to think better of ourselves than we deserve, making it wellnigh impossible for us "to see ourselves as others see us," or even as we really are. We grow to be heroes and saints and wonders of excellence in our own eyes. Our good points of soul or body become tremendously enlarged in our judgment, as though we were looking at them through a magnifying glass, and pride will keep us looking at our good points nearly all the time; while our bad qualities, on the other hand, with all the weaknesses and limitations and follies and sins, which should give us an humble and true opinion of ourselves, become

smaller and more insignificant every time that we glance at them. In some cases people are so blinded by pride that they can't see their bad points at all. I heard an old saying long ago that "the silliest of all fools was the proud fool." And this is too often the truth. Because through pride the ignorant person thinks that he knows a great deal, the plain person considers himself fine-looking, the stupid person has an idea that he is quite clever, and the wicked person gets a funny notion into his head that he is just as good as anybody else.

So thinking better of oneself than one deserves, over-esteeming oneself in this way, might be given as the first symptom of pride. Then another symptom of this vice would be the desire we have that others should think as highly of us as we think of ourselves. In our own kind eyes we are models of excellence; let anybody else dare to hint that we are not such in his eyes, and it disturbs us, makes us sad and sorrowful, angry even, quarrelsome and uncharitable. This is a sign of our pride.



Still another symptom of this vice would appear in our opinion of our neighbors and our treatment of them. The proud person looks down upon others, and makes little of them and of everything that belongs to them. In some extreme cases he will sink so low as to despise his fellow-men. How can a church-steeple be expected to have any regard for the little four-foot post which is stuck in the ground near it? Thus, when the proud fool gives a loose rein to his pride and lets it run away with him, he feels after awhile as though he were a giant and other people dwarfs; and how can he be kind and civil, or even respectful and considerate, to others when they are so far beneath him, according to his foolish notions, that he has to stoop away down from his lofty height in order to see them at all? Hence bad manners, with a total lack of politeness and courtesy, are oftentimes a symptom of pride; while true politeness and the best breeding are founded on humility and lowliness of spirit.

Wherever there is great pride, there will be an unwillingness to give way, to

yield place to others; an unwillingness even to submit to one's superiors; there will be a headstrong and obstinate spirit in having one's own way and following one's own judgment; and worst of all, there will be a forgetfulness of God, a defrauding Him of His glory, a giving to ourselves the honour which belongs to Him, with unwillingness and neglect to thank and praise Him for whatever little good there may be in us.

So pride is dishonest; not only because it gives us merits in our own eyes which are not ours; not only because it deprives others of the consideration and respect from us which of right belong to them, but also, and most of all, because it tends to defraud Almighty God Himself of the honour and glory which are His alone. Pride prompted our first parents to disobey by eating of the forbidden tree. Earlier still it was pride which stirred up the rebellion of Lucifer and his angels, when for one brief moment they defied God in heaven, before they were hurled with their wicked pride into the torments of hell. No wonder then that we read in the Sacred Scriptures

those terrifying words: "I hate arrogance and pride and every wicked way" (Prov., VIII., 13). "For pride is the beginning of all sin; he that holdeth it, shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end" (Ecclus., X., 15). □

Truly and literally it was "the beginning of all sin," and still at this present day it is the source and parent of sins beyond number. We might picture this ruinous vice as the mother of a numerous family. We might picture Pride, with her children all about her, the other sins which spring from her: Vainglory, with its excessive longing for esteem and praise; Ambition, sacrificing soul and conscience in its reckless scramble for honour, dignity and power; Imprudence and Rashness; Overconfidence in oneself, dragging people into temptations which they haven't the slightest need of going near to; Presumption, which makes "fools rush in where angels fear to tread;" Disobedience, raising its puny little finger against the majesty of law; Irreligiousness and Lack of Faith, which are the Disobedience of the Spirit; Obstinacy and Willfulness, the vices of the mule; Boastful-

ness, with the exaggerations and lies which it carries in its train; Contentiousness and Discordancy, always looking for a quarrel; Hypocrisy, throwing its cloak of simulated piety over its carcass of sin. These and many more are the children of Pride, who is herself the first-born child of Satan. And certainly they are a hideous family; a family where every child is ugly beyond description, but where even the ugliest of all the children is not quite so ugly as Pride herself, the mother who bore them.

Rightly then does the Catechism name this vice the first of the seven chief sources of sin, and thus warn us against the many dangers with which it is likely to strew our pathway through this life. To the very close of our life pride will be in us. We can restrain it, guard against it, weaken our pride and make it less, but we can not entirely root it out.

I know a man who has an incurable disease. He does his day's work, and even enjoys life in spite of it. He can never hope to be rid of it; but by taking

good care of himself he will be able to check the disease for years and to keep it down.

Even so with God's help we can keep down our pride, and can hinder it from doing us any grave injury; but we may count upon this: that we shall have to watch and resist it to the very end of our lives.

"Why is earth and ashes proud?" said the inspired writer in the Book of Ecclesiasticus (Ecclus., X., 9). We must never forget that, so far as our bodies go, we are only earth and ashes. "Remember, man, thou art but dust; and into dust thou shalt return." We must never forget our nothingness. Not a thing that we have is strictly our own. Our life and existence, our body and soul, are God's, created by God out of nothing, bound to His service during a few years on this earth, to return to him afterwards for everlasting happiness. We are God's in life and in death. We are His for time and for eternity. Whatever little good we may do, it is of His grace and by His help that we do it. Every praiseworthy quality of every kind, every moiety of

excellence that may be in us, was given by Him. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" said the Apostle. "And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory in it as if thou hadst not received it?" (I. Cor., IV., 7). To Him alone be the honour and glory; and far be it from us to defraud Him of either by foolish and wicked pride.

"God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace" (I. Pet., V., 5). "Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be humbled; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted." (Matt., XXIII, 12).

Therefore, resolve with God's assistance to break off any habit which you may have of making daily meditations on your own virtues and good points. If you must study yourself, think rather of your failings and shortcomings. It will improve your manners even for this world, and will profit your soul for the great future life. But when it is a question of others, who are not under your charge, let their failings be forgotten and their good points ever remembered.

And thus every day in inward thought and by outward action practice sweet humility. It is the violet of the virtues, the little flower which hides itself and scents the air; you could scarcely see it among the other flowers, and yet it is the sweetest of them all.

Nineteen hundred years ago the great God of heaven and earth, the God of supreme excellence and infinite goodness and almighty power, stooped down from the glory of heaven to become a man such as we are. For thirty-three years He lived upon this earth. He was the humblest of the humble. He humbled Himself "unto death, even unto the death of the cross." He said to His followers: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart."

Surely He will assist us to learn of Him, He will grant us an humble and true opinion of our little selves. Surely, if we pray to Him, He will help us to "know ourselves," to know our place, to cultivate lowliness of spirit, and day by day watch and restrain our pride.







# COVETOUSNESS



## COVETOUSNESS.

**T**HE second of the seven chief sources of sin is Covetousness, or avarice.

Covetousness or avarice, whichever we may choose to call it, is an excessive love for money or landed property or any other kind of riches.

It is an *excessive* love or desire for money; because a moderate desire for it, free from all excess, is not sinful at all, at least not for ordinary people, although it might be sinful for those favored souls who have left the world to enter the religious life. Monks and nuns have vowed themselves to holy poverty of their own free will, and therefore are bound, as individuals at least, to keep their hands entirely clean from money. But of course with the rest of mankind it is not so. People living in the world have made no vow of poverty; on the other hand, it is their duty to provide

for themselves, and for wife and children or others who may be dependent upon them. And therefore for people in general a certain moderate and well regulated desire for the world's goods, and for the coins and bills with which they may obtain them, is no sin whatever; ordinarily it is even a duty of their state of life. So it is only when the love of riches passes the bounds of moderation and goes to excess, that it becomes the capital sin of Covetousness.

Now this excess, which might change a moderate and praiseworthy desire for money into the sin of avarice, would be in the desire itself, and not in the sum desired. One can be avaricious in regard to five dollars as well as in regard to five thousand dollars. What is still more astounding, I have heard it said that there are children who are avaricious regarding pennies; and it is certainly true that this debasing passion does lay hold upon some persons very early in life. On the other hand, it's possible for the man or woman who owns a million dollars, to be free from avarice. It's possible, but it's extremely difficult. For a mil-

lionaire to be generous and charitable in adequate proportion to the immense wealth bestowed upon him, for him to remember that he holds his wealth as a trust from God, to be disposed to part with it rather than sin for the sake of it, and thus to keep his love for his property well regulated and free from excess, is certainly very hard, even though it is possible; and in this as well as in many other respects it is far easier for the poor man to save his soul than for the rich man.

Nevertheless we should notice that it's not the love for an excessive sum which makes avarice, but the excessive love for any sum. And in this connection I remember about a miser, a woman, who died a most miserable death. She had lived alone and very secretly, like the misers in stories and plays. She was always in fear of being robbed, and would never let anybody enter her door. And last thing at night and first thing in the morning, in place of night and morning prayers, this woman would take out her gold, piece by piece, and polish and wipe it and feast her eyes upon it, counting

and weighing it in her hands, fondling and almost worshipping it. Well, it was on a winter day that they found her dead. Her body was wasted away as though she had been starving, and there was neither food nor fuel in the house. They found her corpse sitting cold and rigid at the table just as she had died, and on the table was the lamp, which had burned out, and her gold. Twenty guineas, or about one hundred dollars of our money, that was the whole sum, all that she had and all that she had left behind her; and for that small amount she had closed her heart to human sympathy, ruined her body and poisoned her soul.

Now this illustrates the truth that avarice can feed itself on small sums as well as on large sums. An excessive love for money then in any sum, is always avarice. And it is in this sense that the Holy Bible speaks so often of the love of money and condemns it so severely. "Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man," says the Book of Ecclesiasticus; "there is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale" (Ecclus., X., 9-10).

It's a sober fact that there have been people in this world who would sell their souls for money. Let us hope that there are few consumed with such diabolical avarice as that would be. There are persons though, and it is to be feared only too many of them, who would not sell their souls perhaps in order to acquire riches or to preserve or increase their riches, but who would readily commit mortal sin. Now, covetousness of that kind, covetousness so extremely immoderate that a person is always ready and anxious to commit mortal sin to satisfy it, is itself mortal sin. But it seems probable that most people, especially most of the Catholics who are tainted with this vice, are covetous in a milder degree, namely, they are tainted with a love of money excessive, and therefore sinful, but not so wildly excessive as to make them ready to commit mortal sin for the sake of it, and therefore only venially sinful.

So we see that covetousness, like pride, may be either mortal or venial. Like pride also, unless we check it and trample it down in ourselves, it will work a fear-



ful amount of injury to our souls; because aside from its own sinfulness, it will be the source of a multitude of other sins of the most various kinds.

One vice which often springs from avarice, is hardness of heart. The human heart naturally is warm and generous and pitiful. The needs or the sorrows of another readily appeal to it, and it is easily touched and moved to sympathy and mercy. It is willing and anxious to give, to help, to relieve want or pain and console misery wherever it can. That is the heart in its healthy condition, the heart as God gave it to us. But let the vice of avarice get a strong grip upon it, let it be once wrapped up in the excessive love for riches, and it becomes cold as ice and hard as stone, until it seems to have lost all feeling. The covetous man and woman will know that there is want and misery within a stone's throw of their doors, and will not move hand or foot to relieve them. They will see a human being hungry or shivering before their very eyes, and will neither clothe nor feed him. They will break the strict precepts of charity and alms-

giving over and over again, and by breaking them be guilty of many sins. Human wretchedness no longer touches them. Generosity and pity have left their souls, and there remain to them only hardness of heart and miserable selfishness. It is on account of covetousness, some say, more than on account of any other particular vice, that "man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn."

Many sins of discontent and murmuring likewise take their rise from covetousness. There is an uneasy soul, with fear of losing what one has, or sadness at not getting what one has not; and in some extreme cases blasphemy follows, with foolish questioning of God's goodness and grumbling and complaining. On the other hand, where the desires and the cares of riches are kept down within their proper limits, free from excess—in a word, where there is no covetousness—these other sins and evils are likewise avoided.

Now and then crimes of a more violent nature, such as thefts and robberies, assaults and even murders, spring from avarice, being prompted by the immoder-

ate love of money. And frequently this vice is also the source of sins on the part of people doing business with one another. They can't get rich fast enough in an honest way to satisfy their greed for money, and hence there are defalcations and dishonest bankruptcy, bad faith and betrayals, slowness in paying debts, treachery, deceits, lies, cheating in business, and almost every other kind of meanness.

Worse still, in some cases people have actually fallen away from the Church and lost their faith through covetousness. Very poor, lukewarm faith it must have been, but such as it was, covetousness has made an end of it. In our country especially, where Catholics are called upon almost continually to support the Church and its institutions with their money offerings, this has sometimes happened. And indeed it isn't greatly surprising in our day to see some lukewarm, avaricious soul apostatize from the Church rather than give his little towards it, when this very thing was known to occur even in the ancient Church of St. Paul's time. St. Paul tells us of "men corrupted

in mind, and who are destitute of the truth, supposing gain to be godliness. But godliness with contentment is great gain," he says. "For we brought nothing into this world; and certainly we can carry nothing out; but having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content. For they that will become rich," St. Paul continues, "fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils; which some coveting, *have erred from the faith*, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows" (I. Tim., VI., 5 - 10). Surely then if there were people who "erred from the faith" through their avarice at the very beginning of the Church, we need not be startled at seeing such things now.

Indeed, the excessive "desire of money," the greed for riches, which we call avarice or covetousness, is "the root of all evils;" there is not a sin or an evil which

does not sometimes spring from avarice ; and it is very properly classed as one of the seven chief sources of sin.

And this vice of avarice seems to be flourishing in our times more vigorously and more universally than at any former period. How often nowadays do we hear it said that commercialism is the spirit of the age, that this is the age of commercialism. And what is commercialism? Simply a grand-sounding name for money-making. The business men are the rulers of our age. They are the real power behind the thrones. The millionaires are its models. The promoters, trust-organizers and lucky speculators are its heroes, and its favorite motto is contained in the words which a great poet wrote three hundred years ago: "Put money in thy purse." Shakespeare gave those words to the villain of his play; but a modern playwright might fitly give them to his heroes and heroines.

There have been centuries long before our birth, when nobility and chivalry gave men their ideals, when faith was the spirit of the age, when philosophy, poetry and music still appealed to the great multi-

tude, and architecture and sculpture swayed the minds of men. We read about those times in history, but we see them no more. And when we close the book and gaze around us, we perceive that the ideal of our day is neither the saint nor the scholar, neither the soldier nor the poet, but rather the man who can scrape together the largest fortune in the shortest time, and then in the worst taste make the biggest display of his wealth. Thus, with the vast bulk of people, music and poetry and nobility, and religion itself, are crowded out by commercialism. And thus, money-making and money-saving are twin-spirits, which come nearer just now to controlling the world than ever before. Control it completely though they never can nor shall. Now, as always in past and future, "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world;" and God's religion is on this earth to stay while the earth stays; and wherever that religion is, there will always be hundreds of business men with whom even their business is secondary to their faith; business men as full of feeling and charity as they are full of business, warm with

life and with generous human sympathy, though other millions of their kind may be dead and cold from avarice.

“Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded,” St. Paul said, “nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God (Who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy); to do good, to be rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate to others, to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come; that they may seize hold on the true life” (I. Tim., VI., 17-19).

That is the true wealth, that “good foundation,” which we can lay up for ourselves in heaven by being ever merciful and charitable on this earth. Those are the true riches, those which we gather for ourselves where “the true life” is, in the golden future which stretches out through all eternity, beyond death and the grave. Those were the only riches which our divine Saviour cared for. When He came down upon this earth, He might be millionaire or pauper. He chose to be poor. He was so very poor that He could say: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of

Man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt., VIII., 20). Those too were the only riches of His blessed Mother and of nearly all His holy saints. And if we be fortunate enough to gain that everlasting treasure, then whether we should have been poor or wealthy during this brief life, all will be well with us.

In order to secure this most blessed end, let us guard ourselves against the excessive love of earthly riches. May God teach us to look upon money sensibly and rightly and to use it properly, not to worship it, not to desire or love it immoderately, but to part with it from a willing heart in full proportion to our means wherever religion or charity demands. May He make us always generous where generosity is needed, and shield us to the end from the sordid vice of avarice.







**LUST**



## LUST.

**T**HE third of the seven chief sources of sin is Lust. This loathsome vice, which has plunged millions of men, women and children into the fire of hell, is the source of all the different kinds of sins of impurity and immodesty. It is the source of all thoughts, desires, words and actions against the sixth and the ninth commandments. In the mind, in the heart, on the tongue and in the body, whatever is mean and dirty, impure or filthy, comes from lust.

“God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification,” says the great Apostle. “Therefore he that despiseth these things, despiseth not man, but God, Who also hath given His Holy Spirit in us” (I. Thess., IV., 7-8). And again he says: “Do not err: Neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers \* \* \* shall possess the kingdom of

God" (I. Cor., VI., 9-10). For the temptations of lust are in almost every instance temptations to mortal sin. Evil suggestions and bad impulses, arising from the other chief sources of sin, from pride and avarice, anger and gluttony, envy and sloth, are very often temptations to venial sin; but those that come from lust, are nearly always temptations to mortal sin. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly from temptation," says St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, "but to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be tormented, and especially those who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness" (II. Pet., II., 9-10).

So temptations of lust are almost always temptations to mortal sin. Nevertheless, if people overcome those temptations, all is well. No matter how often they are tempted and no matter how foully they might be tempted, they should never be discouraged, but rather always cheerful and thankful to God so long as they are careful not to yield to the temptation. Many of the saints were tempted far worse than we ever are. They fought a harder battle than we have to fight, and

they won a greater victory than we can hope to win. So no matter how vile and disgusting, and no matter how persistent a temptation might be, so long as you give no consent to it, so long as by God's grace you pray against it, fight it, banish it and conquer it, that is a victory for your guardian angel and an overthrow for Satan.

Are people allowed then to go into temptation without necessity, or to stay in temptation when they can escape from it, in order to win victories for their guardian angel? Oh, no. The person who would do that, would be a rash, presumptuous fool in this world and very likely a lost soul in the next. Just the opposite. It is our strict duty to avoid temptation as much as we can, and especially in this matter of cleanness and purity. You pray to God in the "Our Father": "Lead us not into temptation;" and even as you ask Him so often to keep you from temptation, so it is also your part to take every precaution to keep yourself from it. For "God helps those who help themselves."

In these affairs the brave soldier and the victorious hero is the one who runs

away at the very beginning of the fight, the one who, if possible, doesn't meet his enemy at all, whether that enemy be dirty reading, dirty pictures, dirty theatre plays or songs, dirty conversation; or whether that enemy be filthy men or women, or shameless boys or girls. If it were a decent, honorable enemy, a soldier would accept the battle and fight it out; but when it's a crawling, poisonous snake, or a male or female moral leper, then flight is victory, and a swift retreat is honour and glory.

The male and female moral lepers, corrupt and reeking with the foul leprosy of their impurity! O, the wretched ones! "Les misérables!" Pity them if you will—at a distance—and pray for them—at a safe distance. "God pity them all, God pity the worst, for the worst are reckless and need it most!" What a fearful disease is the leprosy of impurity!

You know what an awful disease bodily leprosy is, how catching and contagious. You know how it begins on the skin and very slowly and gradually rots its way inwards through nerves and flesh and bones; that sometimes the joints of the fingers

and toes drop off one by one at long intervals, and sometimes a hand or a foot; there have been cases where after many years of it an arm or a leg has fallen away from the body, just as rotten branches drop off from a tree. This disease of leprosy is so contagious that formerly, in many places, as in many places I believe, even now, a leper was never allowed to enter a city or town or village. Even out in the desert places where he was forced to pass his life, he had to carry a bell with him constantly, and if any healthy person by any chance approached him, he would ring this bell to warn him and would cry out : "Shun the lepers ! Shun the lepers !"

Impurity is leprosy of the soul, just as foul and fatal and just as catching. The impure and the immodest, the indecent and the shameless are all moral lepers. They are not always isolated. They are allowed in towns and cities, because they can hide their impurity to a great extent from the public gaze. In some cases they are living in decent families among decent people; in some cases they are working in factories and shops and offices



where decent people work; in some cases they are attending the schools which are attended at the same time by hundreds of clean and wholesome children. Often to our bodily eyes they may appear sound and pure; for they frequently wear good clothes and disguise themselves with collars and cuffs, or with perfumes, feathers and furs. But their souls are filthy with the foul leprosy of their impurity. The stench and rottenness of their dangerous and most infectious disease is oozing out from every pore of their blackened and decaying souls, and they are moral lepers.

Therefore, as you value the health and cleanness of your immortal soul, shun the lepers; avoid bad company. As you value the everlasting heaven that you are working so hard for, do not select for your associates those persons who must be constantly talking about the things that should not so much as be named among Christians:—"All uncleanness," says the Scripture, "let it not so much as be named among you, \* \* \* or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility" (Ephes., V., 3). Do not choose for your

companions those whose behaviour, either in public or in private, is anything else than Christian, those who are unmanly or unwomanly, lacking in self-control or lacking in self-respect.

Respect for yourself is absolutely necessary. You'll never be fit for heaven unless you have some respect for yourself here on earth ; not pride, of course, but self-respect ; manly and womanly respect for yourselves as God's men and women ; respect for your immortal human soul, and respect also for your human body.

We are not brutes nor beasts nor reptiles. The human body is the most wonderful thing on earth. It is the crown of material nature, the glory of the material universe. Our souls, which belong to the spiritual world, are far nobler still ; but in the material world there is nothing so wonderful, so holy, so worthy of honour and reverence and respect as the human body.

Those eyes of yours, that after your resurrection are going to gaze forever on the all-holy God—how careful you should be of those eyes, how beautifully you should control them, how strict and firm,

how prudent and cautious you should be about what they look at and what they read—those eyes that will gaze upon God! Those ears that will hear the angels, those hands that Mary will take in hers to welcome you; that tongue that will speak to Christ! Therefore the Apostle says: “The body is \* \* \* for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (I. Cor., VI., 13).

Holy things to things that are holy. “*Sancta sanctis.*” Why even when the soul has left it at death, that body of yours will be solemnly and reverently carried into the holiest place on earth, into the house of God, and laid down there as near as possible to the altar itself, and over it the great Sacrifice will be offered. Christ Himself, I may reverently say it, Christ Himself is at the funeral. During the most solemn part of the funeral Mass He condescends to be there on the altar, under the sacramental species, in the presence of that lifeless body. For it is a member of Christ. “Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ” (I. Cor., VI., 15), says St. Paul. And he adds immediately about those unmentionable sins of lust, that he that

committeth them "sinneth against his own body." "Or know you not," he says, "that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, Who is in you, Whom you have from God. And you are not your own. For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body" (I. Cor., VI., 18-20). And when the funeral Mass is finished, and holy water has been sprinkled even on the coffin that contains that holy body, and the smoke of blessed incense has been wafted all around it, then it is reverently borne out again, to be laid as something holy in consecrated, holy ground.

*"Sancta Sanctis."* Holy things to things that are holy. Therefore how holy is the human body! And therefore how foul and hideous are all the different dirty kinds of vile, unthinkable, unspeakable sins, which insult and disrespect that human body either in oneself or in others! See the abominable foulness of impurity. Pride may be stultifying and avarice may be debasing, but it would require hell itself to reveal to us the full horrors of lust.

Hell is crowded with its victims. More souls are there through impurity, many

of the saints thought, than from any other cause. They refused to be men and women. They preferred to be filthy brutes. And hence for all eternity they are vastly worse and lower than brutes. They are lost souls now, and will be damned bodies and souls after the judgment day.

God grant that you may prefer to be, not snakes nor worms, but men and women, whether in the chaste, true love of holy married life, to which God calls the many—husband and wife, faithful forever and true to the last—or in the careful continence of single life, to which He calls the few; “that everyone of you may know how to possess (himself) in sanctification and honour: not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God” (I. Thess., IV., 4-5).

Shun the lepers: avoid bad company. Be careful as to what you read, and careful as to what you give others to read, or allow others to read if they are under your charge. Fly, if you can, at the very first beginning of temptation. Do not give yourself up to idleness. Be occupied and busy, either in labour or in recreation,

either at work or at play. Above all, pray humbly and regularly every day of your life to God, and to His holy saints, and especially to His Virgin Mother.

“O Mary most pure and immaculate, pray for us who have recourse to thee!”

“O my Lady, O my Mother, remember that I am thine! Preserve me, defend me, as thy property and possession!”

For you are her property and possession, given to her by Christ even while He was buying you with His Blood. With almost His last breath, from the cross where He was dying, He said to her: “Woman, behold thy son” (John, XIX., 26).

You are baptized Christians. It was His Blood that washed your soul from original sin while the water of Baptism was flowing on your body. “You are the children of light and children of the day,” as St. Paul says in the Sacred Scripture. You “are not of the night nor of darkness.

\* \* \* For which cause comfort one another and edify one another, as you also do. \* \* \* Always rejoice. Pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all. Extinguish not the

spirit. Despise not prophecies. But prove all things ; hold fast that which is good. From all *appearance* of evil refrain yourselves. And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you in all things ; that your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. \* \* \* The grace of our Lord Jesus Chist be with you. Amen" (I. Thess., V., 5-28).









# ANGER



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## ANGER.

**A**NGER, which is the fourth of the seven capital sins, is not only a vice, but a passion; that is, it works upon and excites the body as well as the soul. Whenever you see a person furiously angry, you may notice this. Unbridled anger seems to change a man into a wild beast. It heats his blood, flushes his face, gouges his eyes almost out of his head, sets his limbs trembling, sometimes makes him foam at the mouth like a mad dog; and hence people who are entirely carried away by their anger, are justly compared in the Sacred Scriptures to mute dogs and to vipers. In some cases a person cannot speak for anger. Sometimes for the moment he is like one drunk or crazy, does not know what he is doing and actually loses the use of reason. Of course, when anger goes to these hideous extremes, it is sinful, and often grievously or mortally sinful.

But on the other hand, when anger is carefully kept within bounds and under the rule of reason, then it is free from sin. "Be ye angry and sin not," says the fourth Psalm (Ps., IV., 5). There is such a thing then as praiseworthy anger; it must be an anger which is not only kept within bounds, but is also for a just cause and no greater than fits that cause. Once in a great while there is even a holy anger. And there are times when for certain persons it is a duty to be angry.

This is especially the case with those to whom God has given charge over others. Rulers in authority over their subjects, bishops and priests in authority over the people, parents and guardians in authority over children, and teachers in authority over their pupils—for all of these anger, if kept within strict and reasonable bounds, may sometimes be virtuous. So it is when a parent, through zeal for God's commandments and without becoming entirely too angry, corrects his child; or when a judge punishes a criminal through zeal for justice; and it is in reference to such cases as these that the inspired Book of Ecclesias-

ticus says: "Anger is better than laughter; because by the sadness of the countenance the mind of the offender is corrected" (Ecclus., VII., 4). Thus St. Gregory could write: "There is one kind of anger which impatience excites, and another kind of anger which zeal causes; the first of these comes from vice, while the second comes from virtue."

But when you are not in charge of anybody, and when you get angry at every little offence against you and often for no cause at all, you may be sure that that is the "anger which impatience excites," the anger which we name fourth of the seven capital sins. There have been boys who would fly into a passion if another boy looked at them, and who would want to use their hands if he simply spoke to them. From real injuries, of course, we are allowed to defend ourselves. It is no duty for us to let anyone kill or even harm us when we have the power to prevent it. But once the injury is done, then to give way to our anger, or perhaps to revenge the offence by doing some other injury just as bad—this is strictly forbidden. It may be that we shall meet

with real offences and injuries in the course of our lives; even then we must not yield to violent wrath nor take the punishment into our own hands. "Revenge is Mine, I will repay, sayeth the Lord" (Rom., XII., 19).

To a certain small extent God has entrusted His "revenge" and His justice to those on this earth who are in power and authority over us; and to these even a Christian may have recourse in certain circumstances. He may go into a court of law, for example, and bear witness against or prosecute another, without any sin whatever; not simply to satisfy his anger though, nor to get his revenge, but through zeal for justice and God's glory; for the correction of the sinner and for the common good. Otherwise, if the law should let murderers and embezzlers, slanderers and thieves, and other criminals go at large without any punishment, it would be neither kind to them nor good for people in general.

But no matter what their provocation may be, Christians must never hate anybody nor wish anyone evil. If you think for a moment, you will easily understand

that it is one thing, and an extremely sinful thing, to pray or wish for evil and misfortune to fall upon some criminal who may have injured you simply through hatred of him; while it is another thing, and free from all sin, to desire and work that the criminal be punished by the law, for his own good, or for the common good, or for the upholding of justice and public order.

To yield to hatred, to take revenge into our own hands, to give way to violent anger—these always are unlawful and wrong for us. So far as we privately are concerned, we must repress our anger and forgive our injuries. "For if you will forgive men their offences," our Divine Saviour said, "your Heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you" (Matt., VI., 14-15). "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt., V., 7). "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land" (Matt., V., 4).

Meekness is entirely opposed to anger. To be meek is much the same as to be mild, gentle, sweet-tempered. Our Di



vine Lord has adjured us: "Take up My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt., XI., 29). And the more we wish to please our Saviour, the more earnestly we will strive to cultivate meekness in ourselves and to give ourselves the habit of constantly bridling our temper and repressing our wrath.

Because we can obtain this habit if we desire to. If we are willing to pray often enough and to work long and hard enough, God will surely help us to subdue our angry passion.

Certainly you must make allowances for one another. And you must have a true and humble opinion of yourself, and must remember that others are just as good and just as dear to God as you are. If anyone is such a daft fool as to think that he is miles above the rest of the world, why then, of course, he will be impatient and angry at every little provocation. But if you are gifted with wisdom enough to know that you are not the only star in the sky, you will bear with others and forgive them.

Oftentimes you can feel the first motions of anger as they begin to stir in you, and that is the very time to check and impede them. Cultivate cheerfulness and the sense of humour. Give yourself the habit of seeing the funny side that there is to nearly every provoking situation. Laugh or smile at that first moment, agreeably change the subject or the situation, and bring back the peace of your soul. Some persons form a rule, and by daily practice make it a firm habit, to do and say nothing while angry, but always to wait a little until they have become calm again; and like nearly all good rules, this rule has its foundation in Scripture: "Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to anger," St. James says, "for the anger of man worketh not the justice of God" (James, I., 19).

In this as in every other respect, prayer will work wonders for you. Right in the heat of temptation a short prayer may be said, even without moving one's lips. Many persons at the very moment when anger seemed to be overcoming them, have saved themselves by a quick and

secret "Hail Mary," or by that little ejaculation which one might think was made for this very purpose: "Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto thine!" Therefore let us also frequently beg God to help us. Over and over again when you are on your knees, either here in the church or in your home, tell Him how much you desire to be humble and patient, how ardently you long to be meek and gentle, and beseech Him to assist you.

And sometimes think of His wonderful patience. How often is He offended and insulted by the human beings whom He has made. Raindrops during a thunderstorm do not fall in such numbers as offences and mortal insults rise up to God from powerless little mortals on this earth; yet instead of striking them dead on the moment and hurling them into hell, as human anger might, how long and how patiently does God wait for their repentance.

Think of the splendid meekness and long suffering of our Divine Lord. He was "led as a sheep to the slaughter" and He opened not his mouth (Isai., LIII., 7).

He was despised, scoffed at, buffeted, spat upon, and He spoke no angry word. "Father, forgive them" came from His lips just before they closed in death. Keep His divine behaviour before your mind, and try hard to do what He asked you to, when He said "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." Strive to follow His example, to think of Him and imitate Him; and that meek example, glorious forever and beyond expression beautiful, which has changed a world of selfish, savage, passionate men and nations into a world that is already to a great extent civilized and softened, will help you also to tame your temper and to conquer your wrath.

It is true that in our law-abiding times anger is likely to do more harm to the person who yields to it than to anyone else; the man who loses his temper, is pitied by kind people and laughed at by those who are unkind, and generally that is the end of it. Nevertheless, anger is a sin, and a source of sins, and it will meet with its judgment and its penalty. Our Saviour has warned us long ago: "You have heard that it was said to them of

old : 'Thou shalt not kill : and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt., V., 21-22).

To be angry with our brother, to be harsh and unforgiving towards our fellow-men, to destroy the peace of happy homes by our lack of self-control—all this degrades and lowers us. We are not wolves nor dogs to pass our lives in snarling and growling at one another, but human beings, who have rule and dominion over the dumb animals, and who must keep a strict rule over ourselves. We are not wild men nor untutored savages, but Christian, civilized men and women. Unreasoning anger is out of place with us. Violent and loud anger, sulky and silent anger, all kinds of sinful anger, are unworthy of us.

Therefore resolve in your heart that it will never do for you to spoil your life or to lose your soul through this vicious passion, and through the many other sins which are likely to spring from it. You must watch your temper, check it, hold

it down day by day, gradually giving yourself a stronger and stronger habit of keeping it in good control. Manly or womanly you should be, but above all gentle. Men and women you are, or will be in any case if you live long enough; but gentlemen and gentlewomen you will never be, save through your own persevering efforts to control yourselves and by the all-powerful assistance of God.

May our Divine Lord grant you the grace to fight this good fight in your soul for His honour and glory. May He, who throughout all the terrible provocations of His mortal life, with its cruel passion, was ever meek and humble, help you to model your hearts upon His sacred heart, and to learn of Him! "Let all bitterness and anger and indignation and clamour and blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ" (Ephes., IV., 31-32).





# GLUTTONY





## GLUTTONY.

**T**HE chief sources of sin are seven :  
Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger,  
Gluttony, Envy and Sloth ; and they are  
commonly called capital sins" (Balt.  
Catech.). The fifth of these is Gluttony.

Gluttony is the immoderate or excessive use of food or drink ; or it is immoderate pleasure in eating and drinking. It is the immoderate or excessive use of food or drink ; because a moderate use of them, free from all excess, and a temperate pleasure in eating and drinking, are no sins whatever.

Now there are two kinds of Gluttony :  
One kind is the excessive use of food or of such drink as is not intoxicating ; while the other kind, which we commonly call drunkenness, is the excessive use of intoxicating drink.

Of course, drunkenness is the worst form of gluttony. Gluttony of any kind

is bad enough. For a person to be greedy at table, for example, to gorge himself with food, to keep on forcing it into himself long after he has ceased to be hungry—is certainly neither nice nor virtuous. But no other kind of gluttony is so thoroughly degrading and beastly and sinful, nor the source of so many sins, as is drunkenness. “The murder of reason, the destruction of strength, immature old age, sudden death,” St. Basil calls it. “The murder of reason,” because it deprives a person of the use of his reason every time that he is fully guilty of it, and also because it weakens his mind more and more as the years go on. “The destruction of strength,” because alcoholic excesses, long continued, will soften the firmest muscles and shatter the strongest constitutions. “Fire trieth hard iron,” says the inspired writer: “So wine drunk to excess, shall rebuke the hearts of the proud” (Ecclus., XXXI., 31); and certainly if you give drunkenness time, it will sap the strength of a giant. So also it is “immature old age,” for those who make a habit of yielding to it, are old before their day. And in many cases, through the accidents

which the drunkard stumbles into, or through rapid and unexpected breaking down of the heart, it is sudden and unprovided death.

Other forms of gluttony, although sinful only too often, hardly ever amount to a mortal sin ; while drunkenness is not only a mortal sin in itself, but also the source of other mortal sins beyond number. People have missed Mass on Sundays over and over again through drunkenness. People, especially young people, in myriads, have wrecked their lives through it just when those lives seemed brightest and most promising. People have committed murder through drunkenness, and have been brutally cruel, and have seriously wronged others in their intense and stupid selfishness. And these are only a few of the mortal sins which drunkenness is likely to be the source of.

Generally the confirmed drunkard is a very selfish glutton. In many cases he no longer really cares either for God or for his own nearest relatives and friends, but only for himself. He is surely one of those whom the Apostle speaks of, who "serve not Christ our Lord, but their own

belly" (Rom., XVI., 18). "For many walk," says the Apostle, "of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping), that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction: whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame" (Philipp., III., 18-19); a scathing, a withering denunciation of gluttony, but especially of that worst species of it, which we name drunkenness; and not my denunciation, nor any mere mortal's, but written by an inspired Apostle, and contained in the Sacred Scriptures, which are the word of God and can not err.

No wonder that the Bible admonishes us: "Look not upon the wine when it is yellow, when the colour thereof shineth in the glass; it goeth in pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk" (Prov., XXIII., 31-32). It is true, according to the same Holy Bible, that "wine was created from the beginning to make men joyful, and not to make them drunk" (Ecclus., XXXI., 35), and it is true that there will always be certain persons who can use it moderately and

without sin. But for the millions of others who can not take wine at all without sooner or later going to excess, it is a dangerous and most treacherous enemy.

But drunkenness is not the only kind of gluttony, nor is it the kind which might be most tempting to children. A vast majority of our boys and girls, thank God, know enough about the dangers of alcohol not to meddle with it ; they may not be very old yet, nor very profound or philosophical, but they have wisdom sufficient for this : not to touch fire, nor play with dynamite, nor sample poisons, nor taste intoxicating drinks.

Sometimes, though, certain children lean more or less towards that other species of gluttony, which consists in the immoderate or excessive use of food, or of drink which is not intoxicating. This form of the vice does not directly produce mortal sins, excepting once in a great while, when a person goes to some terrible excess ; but it does produce many venial sins and imperfections ; and when one indulges in it as a habit and without restraint, it is sure to be very weakening to the soul and very hurtful to disposition

and manners. Suppose that you make it a daily practice to eat until you can not possibly eat any more ; you habitually force yourself to continue eating even after you have ceased to be hungry ; you seize everything within reach and swallow everything which appeals to your fancy, without any consideration for the rights and feelings of the others who are at table with you—certainly your disposition will not long be sweet and unselfish, nor your manners very lovable. Good breeding and good manners show themselves at table more quickly perhaps than anywhere else. “Be not greedy in any feasting,” said an inspired writer thousands of years ago (Ecclus., XXXVII., 32), and everybody knows that our modern etiquette is full of wise rules about one’s behaviour while eating and drinking.

But someone might ask: “How is gluttony weakening to the soul?” Well, in this way. Everything is weakening to the soul which is weakening to the will, because the will is the soul. We might say that both mind and will are only other names for soul; the soul thinking and

reasoning is the mind, the soul choosing is the will; and here on this earth, at table as well as everywhere else, the soul is nearly always choosing; good and evil, right and wrong, are ever before it, and almost continually it has to make its choice between them. Now if a person is a glutton, if a person is constantly thinking of himself and satisfying himself in the matter of food, choosing just what he likes, whether it is good for him or not; trying between meals for example to make a whole dinner on candy just because the taste of it pleases him; habitually eating and drinking more than his natural, God-given hunger and thirst tell him to eat and drink, and exercising no control over himself in this regard, but always yielding to himself—surely he will all the time be weakening his will. You can't strengthen your will to choose right without exercising it daily, and thus giving it the habit of choosing right, any more than you can strengthen your muscles without giving them regular exercise. Just as the professional baseball player practices every forenoon the beautiful game which he must play in



earnest in the afternoon, or just as any athlete exercises his muscles to give them strength and skill for the contest, so we must exercise our will-power, in regard to food as well as in other ways, in order to strengthen our will and keep it ever ready for the battle against Satan. The will that is feeble in the matter of food and drink, is likely to be feeble in other matters also. And the soul which has very often yielded to venial sins of gluttony, may readily yield to sins of other kinds as well.

And this is one of the wise reasons why the Church commands her members to fast and abstain at certain times—not only because fasting and other mortifications are fitting penances or punishments for our past offences; not only because the more of punishment for our sins we willingly suffer on earth, the less we shall have to endure in Purgatory; but also because to fast at stated times, and thus control and master ourselves in regard to food, has a very strong tendency to make firm the will and to give the soul greater power over the body and over the temptations of this life.

Hence the saints frequently fasted. They believed in first conquering the enemy within themselves, and afterwards conquering the foe without. "It's stupid to wage war on enemies in the field," St. Gregory wrote, "without first subduing the enemy within your walls." And even as fasting, while tending to subdue one's vicious self-will, exercises and strengthens the soul, so the opposite of fasting, which is overindulgence or gluttony, is certain to weaken the soul.

Physicians will tell us that gluttony is bad for the body, too, and that moderate eating and drinking help wonderfully towards securing good health. We are told that very many more people die from eating too much than from eating too little. "By over-eating many have perished," says Holy Writ, "but he that is temperate, shall prolong life" (Ecclus., XXXVII., 34). I need not remind you that there is temperance in food as well as temperance in drink. Temperance simply means moderation. The temperate man is a moderate man; and, in the words of Ecclesiasticus, "sound and wholesome sleep with a moderate man; he shall

sleep till morning, and his soul shall be delighted with him" (Ecclus., XXXI., 24). By avoiding overindulgence, then we shall be helping ourselves towards sound and regular sleep, and towards the good health of body, for which sound sleep is so necessary, as well as towards health of soul.

I know that we are required to "take more care of our soul than of our body." Nevertheless we must pay some attention to the body; and in fact it is a duty for us not only to care for our bodies, but to have respect for them in every way. "Know you not," said the Apostle, "that your bodies are the members of Christ?" (I. Cor., VI., 15). In all the material universe, made up as it is of animal and plant and mineral, there is nothing so sacred as the human body.

Therefore let us treat it with due honour and care, governing it for its own good, bringing it under subjection until it is a well-trained servant of the soul, checking its excesses and controlling its appetites. And in our conduct regarding food and drink let us try to imitate those early Christians, of whose moderation

even at their banquets and great feasts Tertullian gives us this beautiful picture: "They eat as much as hungry people desire. They drink as much as moderate people find useful. They don't sit down without fore-tasting a prayer to God. They do not fill themselves too full to adore God in the night. They talk to one another at the table not forgetting that God hears their conversation. They end the meal with prayer."

So in our Christian homes may there ever be Christian moderation and temperance; happy faces around the table, loving hearts; innocent and cheerful conversation; healthy appetites and hearty eating, but never greediness and gluttony; and always, from everyone, the sign of the holy cross, with a short whispered or spoken prayer of blessing at the beginning of the meal, and of thanksgiving at the end of it.

"If you will tread the rough and narrow way to Christ, govern your appetite by temperance," said St. John Climacus. Indeed, it was Christ who warned us: "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your

hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness" (Luke, XXI., 34). "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," wrote St. Paul, "but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom., XIV., 17). "Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (I. Cor., X., 31).







**ENVY**





## ENVY.

**E**NVY, the sixth of the seven capital sins, is sadness of soul at the welfare of another; it is sorrow at another's good fortune. You see somebody else happy, with nice clothes or good looks or talent or riches, and instead of being glad at his good fortune, you are sorry at it, so that you wish he did not have it. That is Envy.

We are strictly bound as Christians to love one another, and hence to rejoice in one another's happiness; but this bitter and loathsome vice would make us do just the opposite. Envious people hate others instead of loving them, and grieve at their happiness instead of rejoicing in it.

Envy keeps company with pride and selfishness. A person is so very selfish that he wants to have everything himself, and so proud that he thinks nobody else is deserving of anything; then when he beholds another person successful and

prosperous, or gifted, or well-dressed, it fills him with a bitter and hateful sadness; as if another's good fortune were his own bad fortune, or as if another's excellence or good points took away something from his own advantages. This sadness is envy.

It is possible to feel a sadness, a little bit like this, but ever so much more unlike it, which would not be envy—a sadness of indignation or of fear or of emulousness. Suppose that you see a man placed in charge of a savings bank where people deposit their money, and you are sorry for his success in getting that position because you happen to know that he is dishonest and therefore unworthy of it; that would not be envy, but rather what theologians might call the sadness of indignation. Or you see a cruel man made master of the school which you attend, and, being afraid of him, you are sorry at his advancement; that would be sadness of fear, rather than envy. Then there is emulousness or emulation. A girl observes some little friend of hers wearing a very pretty new dress; she rejoices in her friend's happiness and would not deprive

her of it for the world, even if she could; but while just as friendly as ever, and glad that the other has new clothes, she is a little bit sorry that she has not some; that sorrow is not envy. And for another example of the sadness of emulation, suppose that two boys are striving for a prize. Of course, one has to win and one to lose. Well, the one who loses is naturally sorry that he has lost. He congratulates the other though, and he means it too, because he is really glad of his success, but at the same time he feels a certain sadness at his own failure. That sadness is not envy, either.

But if you are sorrowful at your neighbor's good fortune simply because you don't love your neighbor enough to be glad at his happiness, or because your selfishness can't endure his prosperity, or because your pride is wounded by his advancement or his advantages, that sorrow is envy, a capital sin and one of the worst of them. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self" (Matt., XXII., 39); and if you do love your neighbor, you will be glad at everything good that he has and at everything good which

befalls him. But when one feels sorrow rather than gladness at one's neighbor's welfare or his good parts, then instead of loving one's neighbor as every Christian should, one either hates him or envies him. That is the difference between Christian charity and un-Christian envy. Charity, or love for our neighbor, rejoices at the good fortune of others as though it were one's own good fortune; while envy grieves over it and feels sore about it as though it were misfortune to oneself.

Now, every advantage and every good quality which a person can have, may be the cause of envy. You can envy a person, if you are bad enough, for his riches, for his success, for the position and honours which he has won. You can envy persons for having gained the favour of their teachers or other superiors, or for having made friends and companions of the very ones you wanted to be your companions; and thus jealousy, "the green-eyed monster," as the poet calls it, is sometimes close to envy. You can envy a person, if you are foolish

enough, for her manners, accomplishments, good looks, fine clothes. And talents, virtues and even graces, may all be the occasions of envy.

The first example of this vice was the father of all vices, Satan, the arch-enemy of God and man. He saw mankind, created by a loving God, placed on earth in a paradise of pleasures, and destined afterwards to fill those very places in heaven which he and his fellow-demons had lost; and consumed with bitter envy, he tempted mankind to sin. Thus "by the envy of the devil death came into the world" (Wisd., II., 24). Afterwards the first murder which ever stained this earth, was prompted by the envy of Cain for Abel, the murder of a brother by a brother (Gen., IV.). Still later on, through envy, another brother planned to kill his brother, when Esau "hated Jacob for the blessing wherewith his father had blessed him and said in his heart: 'Thedayswillcomeofthemourning for my father, and I will kill my brother Jacob'" (Gen., XXVII., 41). So also it was through envy for their brother that the sons of Jacob sold Joseph to the mer-

chants. And again it was out of envy that King Saul, who had formerly been so good a man and so noble a king, persecuted the valiant David. Likewise this vice had much to do with bringing to pass the greatest crime of human history, the crucifixion of our Divine Saviour; for St. Mark in his Gospel plainly tells us that Pilate "knew that the chief priests had delivered Him up out of envy" (Mark, XV., 10).

We see the awful effects of this vice. Widespread it may be, common among men and even commoner perhaps among women and children; but that doesn't make it any better. It causes sins beyond number, and in some cases the most detestable of sins. It is an ignoble and grovelling vice, unworthy of independent men and women; for it is foolish people who give way to anger, but it is small and cowardly people who yield to envy—"anger indeed killeth the foolish, and envy slayeth the little one," says the Book of Job (Job, V., 2). How then, if a person has even a grain of respect for himself, with any desire to retain his self-respect—how can a person stoop so low

as to grieve and repine at another's happiness? We especially who belong to the great Church, with whom the Holy Ghost is forever present: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be made desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another" (Gal., V., 25-26).

Envy is likewise a most ungrateful vice, for frequently it murmurs at the very things for which it ought to be glad and grateful. Thus, while anger is aroused by the faults of others, envy is often excited by their virtues. And to murmur in one's heart at the good qualities of other people, to be discontented and sorrowful because they enjoy blessings which we would wish to take from them, is like grieving at the goodness of God, Who has poured those blessings upon them. Sometimes it would seem as if the envious person wanted God to be good to him only, and not to anyone else. So we may be certain that God will always punish envy, either in this world or in the world to come. "An evil man shall inherit re-



proach and shame; so shall every sinner that is envious and double-tongued," says the word of God (Ecclus., VI., 1).

And this vice, so ignoble in itself and so ungrateful, is also the source of many other sins. Hatred often springs from envy. So does joy at the misfortune of others. And both of these are very foul and very blackening sins. "He that rejoiceth at another man's ruin, shall not be unpunished" (Prov., XVII., 5). From envy also many grievous sins of the tongue are born. People who are small enough to envy others will also, in some cases at least, be mean enough to lie about others. They will stop at nothing in order to punish a person for having something desirable which they themselves have not. It is the very nature of envy to want to blacken what is bright, to pull down what is high up, to smirch and defile what is clean. The higher, the brighter, the purer anything is, the more it is likely to be envied. Hence very many foul falsehoods which non-Catholic writers have told about the Church of Christ; hence also slander, with its wicked lies about private persons, detraction,

rash judgments, and tale-bearings, may all be numbered among the children of envy.

The envious person is so grieved and tortured by his neighbor's success or good fortune, that he goes about doing what little he can to chastise him for it. He babbles false gossip against his reputation. He finds out something true against him, which is more or less of a secret, and takes pains to spread it from one to another until it becomes public news. He hardly ever peddles out an unkind truth of this kind but that he makes it much bigger and worse than it really is. He does a great deal of harm in this world by his bitter and uncharitable tongue, and he invariably receives an awful chastisement for it either in this world or the other.

The envious person breaks up friendships by his tale-bearing, running to and fro from one friend to the other with unpleasant stories, until they are friends no longer. "When the wood faileth, the fire shall go out; and when the tale-bearer is taken away, contentions shall cease," says the Book of Proverbs (Prov., XXVI.,

20). And again it says: "Six things there are which the Lord hateth and the seventh His soul detesteth: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood; a heart that deviseth wicked plots, feet that are swift to run into mischief, a deceitful witness that uttereth lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov., VI., 16-19). Certainly it is an awful sin to sow discord among brethren, to destroy friendships and separate true friends. A true friend is one of the greatest helps that God can give to man or woman, not only for the affairs of this life, but also for the more important business of saving one's soul. "A faithful friend is a strong defence; and he that hath found him, hath found a treasure. Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend, and no weight of gold and silver is able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity. A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality; and they that fear the Lord, shall find him" (Ecclus., VI., 14-16). And to deprive anyone of his friends by envious tale-bearing and filthy gossip, not only works a grievous injury to the one thus deprived,

but renders the tale-bearer himself, or herself, contemptible beyond expression. "The tale-bearer shall defile his own soul, and shall be hated by all" (Ecclus., XXI., 31).

"Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbor? Let it die within thee," says the Holy Book (Ecclus., XIX., 10). We should not even listen to tale-bearers, but should change the subject, pleasantly and civilly if possible. At any rate, in some way or other we ought to discourage the contemptible practice. When people are talking against you, there may be at least patience in your enduring it; but when they are talking against others to you, there is no virtue of any kind in listening to them.

So let us strive hard with God's help to shut out this foul vice of envy from our hearts and from our tongues. If you have a good heart, you will neither cherish envy in your soul, nor allow filthy gossip about anyone, whether false or true, to issue from your lips. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure

bringeth forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke, VI., 45). Thus in a good heart both envy and the sins which spring from it will be stifled and destroyed.

Shame upon those small and cowardly souls who deliberately smirch themselves with this vice! How pitiable it is to see sisters envying each other, or brothers who can not agree. Well, we are all brothers, sons of one God, redeemed by one Christ, destined for one and the same everlasting heaven; and shall we grow green with envy (as they say), or yellow or livid, because others are better off than we? Grieve and be miserable because they have passed us a little in the race of life? We are all members of one body; and does the eye envy the ear, or the foot envy the hand? It is the inspired St. Paul who tells us that the Church is one body. Christ is its head, and we are its members. "And if one member suffer anything," St. Paul says, "all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it" (I. Cor., XII., 26).

Would that we might be like those first Catholics of the early Christian times, when all, or nearly all, were saints of God—when “the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul” (Acts, IV., 32). Then, in place of sorrowing at another’s good fortune, we would ever “rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep” (Rom., XII., 15). Even as we do not envy the sun for shining but rather rejoice in its light, so with Christian charity we would ever delight in the happiness of our fellow-men and women. We would congratulate one another and praise one another, not with deceitful flattery, but with honest, hearty praise, generously given wherever we thought it was deserved and that it might do good. We would pray for one another. And above all, we would love one another, not forgetting that our blessed Saviour said to His Apostles, and through them to us, on the very night before He suffered and died: “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another” (John, XIII., 34-35).



**SLOTH**





## SLOTH.

**S**LOTH is the last of the seven chief sources of sin. Sloth is laziness about doing right, laziness about doing one's duty; and as often as it keeps anyone from doing what he is bound to do, so often it is a cause of sin for him. Sloth is likewise sadness about spiritual things; for with laziness about one's duties and graces there is sure to be discouragement and despondency and sadness regarding them. So while envy is a sort of sadness at good in our neighbor, we might say that sloth is sadness at spiritual good in ourselves. In many cases the slothful person will have a spiritual nausea, a positive dislike, not only for virtue and holiness, but also for prayer, good works, the commandments, and even the Sacraments.

"My soul hath slumbered through heaviness," said the great King David (Ps., CXVIII., 28). His son and successor

Solomon, describes for us the drowsiness of those who are oppressed by the vice of sloth: "As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed," he says (Prov. XXVI., 14). "The slothful hideth his hand under his armpit, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth" (Prov., XIX., 24). It is in this guise that the Sacred Scriptures paint for us the slothful man and the slothful woman—weighed down with sleep and heaviness, too weary to raise food to the mouth, too lazy to move hand or foot, even though eternal happiness and eternal misery hang in the balances and depend upon their activity and zeal.

"Go to the ant, O sluggard," said King Solomon in that same inspired Book of Proverbs, "and consider her ways and learn wisdom; which, although she hath no guide nor master nor captain, provideth her meat for herself in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou rise out of thy sleep?" (Prov., VI., 6-9). And again he tells us: "I passed by the field of the slothful man,

and by the vineyard of the foolish man; and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down. Which when I had seen, I laid it up in my heart, and by the example I received instruction. Thou wilt sleep a little, said I, thou wilt slumber a little, thou wilt fold thy hands a little to rest: and poverty shall come to thee as a runner, and beggary as an armed man" (Prov., XXIV., 30-34). Thus also poverty of soul, beggary of soul, misery and eternal ruin will fall upon those who are too lazy to work for their salvation.

People who continue in their sins instead of confessing them, and put off their conversion and penance from day to day, are slothful. "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for His wrath shall come on a sudden and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee" (Ecclus., V., 8-9). People who receive Holy Communion only just when they are strictly bound to, or more rarely still, are generally slothful. They are slothful too who obey commandments and orders not cheerfully, but in a mo-

rose and sulky manner. Not to care, is sloth. Lukewarmness, coldness, indifference about religion, come from sloth. "I would that thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth. \* \* \* Be zealous therefore and do penance" (Apoc., III., 15-19). The malice which hates the truth and sneers at piety and laughs the idiot's laugh over things of religion, often springs from sloth. The rancor which makes people indignant against priests or parents or other superiors who rebuke and correct them, is from sloth. "The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed, and health shall not follow him," says the Holy Book (Prov., XXIX., 1). "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me. And he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me" (Luke, X., 16). Smallness of soul, cowardice, discouragement about one's salvation, downheartedness and despondency, may all arise from sloth. Despair itself, that worse of all earthly conditions, that

awful darkness of soul through which no ray of hope any longer shines, is sometimes caused by this vice.

Notwithstanding all this, sloth is extremely common in the world. Laziness about temporal things, such as work and business, may be seen here and there; but laziness about saving our souls can be seen almost everywhere. And yet to save our souls is the business of our lives, compared with which no other occupation is of any importance whatever. Sometimes boys and girls, when they have little else to do, will speculate about the trade or profession or line of business which *they* are going to follow when they shall be old enough. There's no great harm in that, either. Only, it's an exceedingly foolish boy or girl who will ever forget that his chief trade or profession or business is to save his soul. This life lasts, we will say, for seventy years, and that's a long time, but the next life lasts so endlessly long that seventy-millions times seventy years would not make one minute of it. So we can easily understand that, while laziness

in temporal things may be bad enough, laziness in spiritual matters is simply idiotic and ruinous.

And yet it's exceedingly common. Look about you in this world and you will notice that the people who act as though they really "meant business" regarding their souls, are unfortunately few and far between. The vast majority of men and women, on the other hand, almost forget that they have souls. We Catholics may seem quite numerous, the few thousands of us who gather in the church here on Sunday mornings; but think of the many thousands outside, who never enter a church, the slothful multitudes who have no use for churches. To read anything religious or to hear talk about religion would bore and weary them. The very thought of practical religion would shock them worse than the idea of steady work would shock a tramp. Yet many of these very people keep busy enough in their little worldly affairs, while it is only in the lasting affairs of the next life that they are lazy and slothful. Blindfolded and fooled by the devil, they live for bodily things alone;

and they shut out spiritual things from their hearts and homes as they would shut out some contagious disease.

Slothfulness is the air and the life-blood of these vast millions of unfortunate outsiders; while even here on the inside, even with the children of the Church, it is only too common. What can we say about ourselves, for example? Are we as zealous and as energetic as we might be? Are we "hustling," as some business men say, to please God and to save our souls? No doubt some are; but I am afraid that many of us, if we were working for a wide-awake business man and should serve him as lazily as we serve God, would very soon be paid off and discharged. God, however, does not discharge His lazy servants, excepting perhaps by gradually withdrawing from them the graces which they despise and reject. God waits patiently until the work-day of life is over, and then He rewards, or punishes. The reward is a wonderfully beautiful reward, and the punishment is a terrible punishment. And if we desire to avoid this and to gain



that, we must shake off our sloth and laziness and get down to work.

Let me ask the children: What do you do in school when you really wish to keep up with your class and to win your promotions? You certainly do not fall asleep in your chair nor sit there idly staring at the wall. No, you are awake and alert, you study hard, you obey the rules about promptness and silence and attention, you listen earnestly to instructions and explanations, and you ask your teacher for special assistance whenever you think that you need it. School is but a preparation for life, and life itself is merely a preparation for the eternal glory. Therefore in this world-school of our earthly existence we must also be wide-awake and alert, we must obey the rules, which are the commandments of God and of His Church; we must listen most attentively to the instructions and sermons of our teachers and try to understand and try to remember; and over and over again by our prayers we must ask God for His special assistance. If we strive hard to do all these things, we shall be doing very much towards conquering our sloth.

School is all right in its way, and a high-school diploma or even a grammar school diploma is a very nice thing to have earned. But how trivially insignificant these little things are when compared with heaven; and how silly would be that boy or girl who, while zealous and busy at educating the mind, were lazy and idle in training the soul!

What do people do out in the world when the short and happy years of school are over? They are children no longer now, but toilers and bread-winners who have to gain an honest livelihood for themselves and their families. Do they sleep all day and loaf and idle away their time, as if they expected wages and food to fall down from the sky to them? No, they rise when the night is over and gird themselves for labour. They waste no time, but make good use of every fleeting hour. Their mind and their whole attention is on the task before them, and they plot and plan continually how best to accomplish it. And so day after day with them it is steady, persevering work. And for what purpose? Why, to gain support for themselves and for those who are dear to

them: Support, that is, a home, food, clothing, maybe some few of the refinements and luxuries of life. Certainly life is longer than school, two or three scores of little years longer. But even life itself would not be so much as one drop of salt water in the great ocean of eternity. How foolish then are those who take more interest in the little matters of this ridiculously short life, than they take in the great affairs of the unending life to come! What wretched folly to be hard-working and industrious about things of the body, while careless and slothful in saving the soul!

The rewards of heaven are not promised to those who are asleep or idling in spiritual matters, but to those who watch and work. "Watch ye therefore," said our Divine Saviour, "for you know not when the Lord of the house cometh: at even or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning: lest coming on a sudden He find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: watch!" (Mark, XIII., 35-37). "Take ye heed," He said again, "watch, and pray; for ye know not when the time is" (Mark, XIII.,

33). There is absolutely no sense in deceiving ourselves, nor in letting the bad example of rash and reckless millions around us, nor even the devil himself, with all his cunning, fool and destroy us. we must be wide awake, alert, vigorous and stirring in spiritual things; and while never neglecting our temporal affairs, we must everywhere and at all times make our religion and the salvation of our souls the first and chief business of our lives. We must train ourselves to delight in God, to delight in His worship, to find a reasonable joy in keeping His commandments and in partaking of His sacraments. To the very end of our lives Satan will strive to blindfold and mislead us, as he has done and is doing with multitudes of others; he will strive to make spiritual things a weariness and a bore to us. But God is on our side, and with God's assistance we may baffle Satan, till our love of God masters our soul and directs our destiny. "Burn with the fire of divine love," said St. Augustine, "lest you burn with the fire of hell." "With fear and trembling work out your salvation," wrote the inspired Apostle

(Phillip., II., 12). "In carefulness not slothful, in spirit fervent, serving the Lord" (Rom. XII., 11). "And do ye all things, without murmurings and hesitations: that you may be blameless and sincere children of God, without reproof, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phill., II., 14-15).

Thus we must arouse our souls from this fatal sleep of slothfulness, and must keep them watchful and active to the end. For in our passage through this life we shall have many foes to contend against and to conquer. There will be foes without and foes within. Without us will be the allurements of this world, with its empty pomps and shows; schools and colleges from which religion is exiled; poetry and history, plays and novels, magazines and newspapers, from which religion is excluded; the disguised and treacherous temptations of our arch-enemy, Satan; the bad example and evil influence upon us of blinded and religionless millions, whom he is leading foolishly along on the perilous edge of hell. And even within ourselves we will have to

battle against the depravity and degeneracy of our fallen nature; a darkened intellect, a weakened will, a strong inclination towards evil; and those capital vices and sources of sin so deeply planted in us, of which the chief are pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth. Pride and anger will dispose us towards disobedience, irreverence, contempt for lawful authority, towards stubbornness and stupidity. Covetousness, whose other name is avarice, will tend to dry up and harden the heart, making it as barren and unlovely as the coins and bills which it worships. Lust and gluttony will do what they can to degrade us and to drag us down near those beasts of the earth which wallow in their mire. Envy will strive to destroy in us that lower species of charity which is love of our neighbor. And sloth will aim at weakening in our hearts the higher kind of charity, which is love of God.

Against all these foes of ours, within and without, we must wage a gallant war, never for one moment losing heart nor forgetting that Almighty God, with His infinite power, is on our side in the

struggle. Periodical confessions during our short earthly life, always preceded by a thorough examination of conscience; frequent Communion in the divine Sacrament of our Blessed Lord's Body and Blood; regular and fervent prayer to God; remembrance of the awful yet consoling fact that we are ever directly and closely in His presence—and the great fight will be won. He has promised us the victory if we only do our share; and so surely as we hope in Him we shall triumph. "From the morning watch even until night let Israel hope in the Lord. Because with the Lord, there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities" (Ps., CXXIX., 5-6).











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